



## The Farm, Nutrition and Community Investment Act

*Meeting the Needs of Farmers, Ranchers, Consumers and the Environment in the 2007 Farm and Food Bill*

The United States boasts some of the most productive agriculture in the world. Much of this success is due to the diversity of crops, soil types and production found around the country that generates an unparalleled variety of food, fiber, and increasingly, fuel products. However, most farmers and ranchers don't benefit from current farm policies. Many are turned away from conservation programs, and each year there are fewer farmers and less farmland. Moreover, in a land of plenty, far too many people go hungry and many communities don't have adequate access to fresh, healthy, local and affordable food.

A coalition of stakeholders and legislators are supporting a new direction in farm and food policy with the Farm, Nutrition and Community Investment Act, soon to be introduced by Rep. DeLauro (D-CT) and Rep. Gilchrest (R-MD). The bill will help organize a broad partnership around a range of priorities including:

- Funding for value-added farm products, direct-to-consumer marketing, and the infrastructure needed to support regional food systems;
- Expansion of working lands conservation programs and improved farmland protection;
- Strengthening of the federal Food Stamp Program, and expanded consumer access to fresh fruits and vegetables;
- Increased focus on energy efficiency and on-farm renewable energy production; and,
- Support for specialty crop and dairy producers.

### Status Quo: Policies Don't Address Priorities

Historically, federal farm programs have underserved farmers, ranchers and consumers. Fruit and vegetable farmers, ranchers and livestock producers lack a sufficient safety net and adequate risk management tools. Additionally, much of our agricultural land faces development pressures from growing populations and sprawl. Federal policies that encourage stewardship of our shared natural resources—air, water, land and wildlife—and give communities tools to conserve farmland are woefully under-funded. Other programs that farmers and ranchers need to remain economically viable, such as market and infrastructure development and renewable energy production, receive little support.

The farm bill is also a food bill. Many Americans who need food assistance—such as the working poor and elderly—go hungry due to insufficient resources. At the same time, the lack of a properly balanced diet has led to an epidemic of obesity, diabetes and other food and diet related diseases. Although nutrition guidelines call for eating more fruits and vegetables, and a bounty of fresh, local food is at the doorstep of many Americans, federal farm policies do not do enough to support access to this healthy food.

Commodity programs  
support just

**39%**

of the nation's farms

**35 million**

Americans do not have all  
they need to eat

## A Foundation for Farms and Food

In addition to nutritious food, farms, ranches and forests provide critical environmental benefits like water filtration, air quality improvements, wildlife habitat and open space. Farmland also is deeply rooted in our national heritage—an intangible sense of place—that adds to the quality of life for all Americans. Instead of compromising their competitiveness, farmers and ranchers need policies that will support their good stewardship of the land and help connect them to the millions of consumers eager for fresh, healthy and local foods.

## Elements of the Bill

- **Market and Economic Development:** Provide states with a significant source of funding for programs and projects that reflect the diversity and needs of each state's agricultural sector—in areas such as farm viability, market and product development, local and regional infrastructure needs, buy-local efforts and consumer education. Such programs can revitalize local and regional food systems and improve farm profitability.
- **Conservation:** Expand and improve working lands conservation programs and increase access for producers by providing a minimum base allocation of conservation funding for every state.
- **Farmland Protection:** Increase funding for farmland protection, eliminate federal capital gains on the sale of agricultural conservation easements, and modify the federal Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) to assure better integration with state farmland protection programs.
- **Renewable Energy:** Expand ability to access and develop sources of renewable energy produced by agricultural operations and improve on-farm energy efficiency.
- **Forestry:** Reauthorize and strengthen the forestry title with a focus on better forest planning, additional stewardship incentives for forest landowners and funding to help communities acquire locally important forest lands.
- **Crop Insurance:** Expand and improve the delivery of crop insurance to ensure diverse farm operations have access to better risk management tools.
- **Dairy:** Provide a better economic safety net to reflect the unique needs of dairy producers.
- **Organic:** Create a new national organic certification and transition cost-share program.
- **Nutrition:** Strengthen the Food Stamp Program by simplifying the application process, improving program benefits and expanding eligibility. Increase funding for distribution of commodities as emergency food assistance to people in need.
- **Healthy Diets:** Expand fresh fruit and vegetable programs to schools nationwide and allow for geographic preferences in food purchasing programs. Expand support for farmers' market promotion and nutrition programs.



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